Autism Is Welcome Here

The ACCESS Approach to Inclusion

Presented by Suzi Tonini

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Learner Goals

Learn about the unique needs of the autism community.

Learn strategies for creating an autism-friendly library climate.

Learn strategies for sourcing books with authentic and affirming representation of autism.

Learn ideas for designing programming to engage neurodivergent children and teens.

Learn strategies and ideas for serving autistic youth from session participants.
Adriana White, autistic librarian and writer (Adriana's website)

Autism and Neurodiversity: Different Does Not Mean Broken, | TEDxPaloAltoCollege
What percentage of today’s participants self-identify as autistic, or have a family member, friend, or coworker who is autistic?
1 in 36 children are diagnosed with autism (approximately 4% of boys and 1% of girls).

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
There is a research gap in studies on autism in adulthood. It is common to miss an ASD diagnosis until later in life.
Approximately 1/3 of children with ASD also have an intellectual disability.
Autism affects all ethnic and socioeconomic groups.

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
Early intervention affords the best opportunity to support healthy development and deliver benefits across the lifespan.

National Early Childhood Technical Assistance Center
Autistic individuals often experience sensory sensitivity.

Autism Society
Autistic individuals may have greater difficulty shifting attention from one task to another or adapting to changes in routine.
The Māori word for autism is Takiwātanga.
It means "in your own time and space."
Autism affects communication and social behavior.

Autism Society
Michael McCreary, autistic comedian and author

Autism Ontario -- See the Potential with Michael McCreary
Autistic children and teens often have very specific, deep interests.

Autism Society
"There are three turrets and the middle turret is the highest one. The highest turret has a square-based pyramid roof and a balcony."
Autistic people are more likely to identify as LGBTQ+. 

University of Cambridge
“A top-notch blend of contemporary fiction and mystery with a satisfying conclusion [. . .] A thrilling debut.”
–Kirkus Reviews, starred review

“Readers will leave this poetic book feeling that Sam and the people surrounding them are completely real, along with the ghosts of Astoria.”
–Booklist

“Exhilarating […] Equal parts delicate and devastating.”
–Publishers Weekly, starred review

“A spine-tingling and romantic, character-driven story.”
–School Library Journal, starred review

Author Maya MacGregor's website
Young adults on the autism spectrum are more likely to be diagnosed with anxiety and depression and are at higher risk for suicide.
Search for courses
What can WE do as librarians to better serve autistic youth and their caregivers?
Access a PDF copy of the ACCESS poster here.
## Sensory Accessibility Checklist

### Environment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Ok</th>
<th>Parking is easy.</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Handicap spaces are adequate &amp; located near entrance.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Public transportation is nearby.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Entrance is clearly marked.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

### Arrival

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Ok</th>
<th>A person welcomes me when I come in.</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>It is clear where to go first (entrance, line up, purchase tickets, etc.).</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>It is clear where to go if you have questions or need help.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Lines are not long or you do not have to wait.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Tickets can be purchased through a machine.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Entry

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Ok</th>
<th>There is a sign welcoming people with different abilities.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>There is a kiosk or accessibility window.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>There is a special line for people who have trouble waiting.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Navigation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Ok</th>
<th>There is a map providing an overview of the space.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>You can see where paths lead.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>There aren’t too many choices about where to go.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>There are signs at decision points.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Signs are clear and understandable.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Signs include pictures or symbols.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>There is a visual map of the space.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>A visual schedule is available.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Other augmentative communication tools are available.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

### Safety

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Ok</th>
<th>It is comfortable to have a stroller or wheelchair.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>The space is enclosed to prevent elopement.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>There are clear sight lines, especially to exits.</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>There are comfortable nooks.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>The space is not crowded.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Strollers are available, including for older children/adults.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Librarians can model acceptance.

- Autism is a neurological difference.
- "How can I help?"
- "How can I support your child?"
- Library workers' interactions with autistic patrons and their caregivers have the power to model inclusivity for patrons.
Librarians can model acceptance.

"All of the employees have been super understanding of [my son] not being able to sit for story time and needing constant movement to stay regulated...he prefers to explore the space and it's one of the few places that we feel good about letting him."

"They are nice but lack kindness, they have sensory items for the children but they hover over the children to make sure we don't steal the equipment."

"The staff have been wonderful with our son. They're never taken aback by any of his sounds that can sometimes include screeching. They speak kindly to him and often get down on his level. Again, knowing that he's in a safe and welcoming space takes a lot of the pressure off for him to just be a kid and learn at his own time and pace."
Librarians can model acceptance.

"She wasn't feeling well and had a lot of anxiety, so she couldn't attend a Teen center back to school activity and staff put aside a crafting kit for me to pick up for her to do at home. They even went looking for her favorite color."

"Many of the staff remember my child, ask about special interests, offer recommendations of books and games, show a lot of respect and trust of my child, and more. We are so so grateful for the staff who really honor the dignity in all."

"He loves talking to library staff about his interests. He also loves when the library staff remember him and point out new books that interest him."
Librarians can promote competence by sharing what to expect from the library experience.

- Social narratives (sample)
- Video modeling (sample)
- Clear signage
- Visual schedules (sample and Visual Schedules: A Practical Guide for Families, University of Utah)
This is My Library

A Social Story about visiting the library
Welcome to the Secaucus Public Library!
Sensory Storytime Visual Schedule

Welcome  Song  Song  Book  Stretch Song
Stretch Song  Bean Bag Song  Book/Felt Board  Scarves Song  Scarves Song

Bubble Song  Playtime
Librarians can create a comfortable library environment.

- Sensory break area
- **Sensory equipment** to self-regulate (headphones, manipulatives)
- Low lighting
- Quiet areas (quiet study zone)
"The Discovery Center is designed for the special needs community, but all our patrons benefit." -- Jason Buydos, director of the Louisville (Ohio) Public Library
Too Noisy?

Ask ideaLAB staff for kids noise cancelling headphones to borrow.
Create zones for patrons to take sensory breaks.

This does NOT mean your entire library has to be a whisper-only environment!
Librarians can offer inclusive programming to engage autistic children and teens.

- Sensory-friendly makerspace hours
- Sensory-friendly craft and STEAM events
- Sensory-friendly storytime
- Chess Club
- Magik tournaments
- Dungeons & Dragons meet-ups (virtual and in-person)
Librarians can offer inclusive programming to engage autistic children and teens.

"Make sensory play a bigger thing in the children's area. My kid is sensory seeking so playing with textures and smells is really exciting for him."

"More hands-on stuff is incredible. I think the maker spaces and training in those things are great!"

"Have autism times or days celebrating autistic people."

"Offer programs specifically geared towards AAC communication. We do lots of reading with the assistance of his device. It would be nice to see that normalized in public."
Storytime with AAC

Saturdays, 10:30am-11:30am
June 3, June 24
July 15, July 22
August 5, August 26
Sept 9, Sept 23

Union City Library
34007 Alvarado-Niles Road,
CA 94587

AAC stands for Augmentative and Alternative Communication

Build your child’s communication skills through Shared Reading!
“Storytime with AAC” aims to support families/caregivers of AAC users in demonstrating language on their child’s AAC device, along with developing a love for reading and building language through shared interaction and connection. This program is conducted by graduate students in the Speech-Language Pathology program at Cal State East Bay.*

Who Can Attend? This program is designed for emergent communicators four years old and up (emergent communicators are new/existing AAC users who typically communicate with single words). Open to children of all abilities! Please note that communicating with an AAC device is usually very slow, and we will pace storytime with this in mind.

A parent/caregiver must accompany the child for all the sessions. Due to limited seating, we request only 1 caregiver per child. For questions or additional accommodations, please contact Polina at prubanova@aclibrary.org or 510-745-1464, ext 6.


*Funded in part by Department of Education training grant “LISTEN with AAC.” Contents do not necessarily represent the views of the Department of Education.
Librarians can help autistic youth and their caregivers connect with one another.

- After-hours events for families and teens
- Support group for caregivers of autistic youth
- Support group for autistic teens and young adults
Library Welcomes Kids on the Autism Spectrum to an After-hours Evening of Valentine’s Day Fun

LONGMONT, Colo. – The Longmont Public Library continues its series of programs for children on the autism spectrum and their families with a fun after-hours evening on Friday, February 9, from 5:30 to 7:30 pm.

Kids on the Spectrum - After-hours Event
Valentine’s Day Fun!
Sweet treats; crafts, LEGOs; yoga storytime; animated films Friday, February 9; 5:30 to 7:30 pm; Register online

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LONGMONT, Colo. – The Longmont Public Library continues its series of programs for children on the autism spectrum and their families with a fun after-hours evening on Friday, February 9, from 5:30 to 7:30 pm. After the Library closes to the public at 5 pm, children and teens on the autism spectrum and their siblings will enjoy sweet treats, crafts, LEGO building, yoga storytime, and animated short films. Meanwhile, parents will be able to talk to resources providers for families with children and teens on the spectrum, and a pizza dinner will be provided to all. This is an accompanied event; parents should plan to stay with their children for the duration of the event.

The event is free, but registration is required. Register online at http://bit.ly/LBPkids. No internet or email address? Call 303-651-8477 to register. Join us for a night of Valentine’s Day fun!

SUMMER LOW SENSORY MORNINGS AT DENVER BOTANIC GARDENS

Experience Denver Botanic Gardens without the crowds. York Street gardens will open at 8 a.m. on select Saturday mornings for those who wish to connect with plants in a safe, restful location. This therapeutic horticulture program is intended to give individuals and families who prefer a quiet, less-crowded environment a chance to experience the Gardens with limited attendance. On these mornings you are invited to explore on your own and learn more about other sensory-based programming the Gardens offers that will inspire curiosity and awaken your senses.

1007 York Street
botanicgardens.org

DATE AVAILABILITY:
- Saturday, April 29, 2023
- Saturday, May 27, 2023
- Saturday, June 24, 2023
- Saturday, July 29, 2023
- Saturday, August 19, 2023
- Saturday, September 2, 2023

Disfrute de los Jardines Botánicos de Denver sin las multitudes. Los Jardines en York Street abrirán a las 8:00 de lo mañana algunos sábados para personas que deseen conectarse con las plantas en un lugar seguro y tranquilo. Este programa terapéutico de horticultura tiene el propósito de proporcionarle a individuos y familias que prefieran un ambiente tranquilo la oportunidad de disfrutar los Jardines con pocos visitantes. Durante estas mañanas, les invitamos a explorar por su cuenta y a aprender más acerca de los programas sensoriales que ofrecen los Jardines, los cuales le inspirarán curiosidad y despertarán sus sentidos.

Fechas disponibles:
- sábado 29 de abril del 2023
- sábado 27 de mayo del 2023
- sábado 24 de junio del 2023
- sábado 29 de julio del 2023
- sábado 19 de agosto del 2023
- sábado 2 de septiembre del 2023

Puede inscribirse en línea en mañanas de bajo estimulo sensorial y llame al 720-865-3500 si tiene alguna pregunta.

1007 York Street
botanicgardens.org
Librarians can help autistic youth and their caregivers connect with one another.

"I have connected with other families going through similar family situations and changes.

It is amazing knowing others and not feeling so isolated when it comes to learning how to raise our children, especially neurodiverse children!"
6 Librarians can connect caregivers with information and community resources.

- **Autistic Self-Advocacy Network**
- **Organization for Autism Research**
- **Autism Society** (national org and local affiliates)
- **Neurodiversity Celebration Week**
Autism Community Store

Autism Resource Fair 2024

Save the Date for the largest Autism Resource Fair in Colorado!

Sunday
MAY
19th
Librarians can connect caregivers with information and community resources.

"When my son hit puberty, I wanted some books to help me explain it to him, so I reached out to the children's librarian. She put me in touch with a regional library autism specialist, who then did some research and came up with 3 book recommendations.

The books weren't available through the library, but the library purchased them, which amazed me. All 3 books were good and one was ideal. I ended up buying a copy for myself.

My son and I read it a few pages at a time over several months and it made the various puberty changes much more comfortable for him."
Librarians can curate a collection of books with authentic, affirming representation of neurodiversity.

AVOID
- The Emotionless and Robotic Savant
- The Annoying Sibling or Sidekick
- The Unrealistic Inspiration
- The Walking Diagnosis

LOOK FOR:
- Autistic Main Characters
- Multiple Autistic Characters
- An Internal View of Autism

"Autism Representation in Books" by Adriana White
What percentage of today’s participants have read a book with authentic, affirming representation of autism?
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>Book Title</th>
<th>Topic(s)</th>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Summary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>10 Things I Can See From Here</td>
<td>Anxiety</td>
<td>Carrie Mac</td>
<td>Think positive. Don’t worry; be happy. Keep ...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>A Box of Butterflies</td>
<td>Social-Emotional Learning</td>
<td>Jo Rooks</td>
<td>When Ruby asks Robot if he loved the story ...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>A Boy And A Jaguar</td>
<td>Speech Disorder</td>
<td>Alan Rabinowitz</td>
<td>Alan loves animals. but the great cat house ...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>A Boy Called Bat</td>
<td>Autism Spectrum</td>
<td>Elana K. Arnold</td>
<td>The first book in a funny, heartfelt, and irresi ...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>A Church for All</td>
<td>Social-Emotional Learning</td>
<td>Gayle Pitman</td>
<td>This simple, lyrical story celebrates a Sunday...</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Denver Public Schools' eBook and audiobook Neurodiverse Reads Collection

131 eBooks, 16 audiobooks

Neurodiverse Reads

A collection of fiction stories featuring authentic representation of neurodiverse characters and nonfiction books about ADHD, autism, dyslexia, and other neurological and learning differences.
Librarians can advocate for school libraries as safe havens for autistic children and teens to take sensory breaks and avoid bullying.
Librarians can advocate for school libraries as safe havens for autistic children and teens to take sensory breaks and avoid bullying.

Which of the following best describes your child's school library usage?
What Is a Highly Effective School Librarian?

A highly effective school librarian is a certified teacher who leads information, media, and digital literacy instruction, manages the school library print collection and digital resources, and promotes a school culture of independent reading and lifelong learning.

A school librarian benefits every learner in the school community through five key responsibilities: planning, instruction, environment, management, and leadership.

- **Partners with school administrators** to align instruction with school goals to positively impact student achievement.
- **Designs instruction and programming** that builds community, promotes students’ wellbeing, and empowers students to learn independently.
- **Collaborates with classroom teachers** to teach the Colorado Academic Standards, meet learners’ diverse needs, and prepare students for the future.
- **Creates and facilitates learning experiences** that teach information, media, and digital literacies, including digital citizenship.
- **Creates an inclusive and culturally responsive library environment** that welcomes all students and supports their social and emotional needs.
- **Collaborates with school leaders and the school community** to ensure the library space is safe, accessible, appealing, and flexibly accommodates different learning opportunities.
- **Manages all aspects of the physical and digital library collections**, including selection, purchasing, processing, organization, and circulation of resources.
- **Curates and provides equitable access to current, accurate, and inclusive library resources** that complement the curriculum and motivate students to learn.
- **Enforces policies and procedures to manage materials selection, challenged materials, weeded materials, gifts and donations, and student privacy.**
- **Supports educators by curating learning resources**, leading professional development, and promoting responsible, ethical use of information and technology.
- **Builds relationships with students, families, school staff, and community organizations** and serves in positions of responsibility.
SLIDE Project District and State Profiles

**School Library District Profile**

**Boulder Valley School District No. RE2, CO**

**At a Glance**

2021-22 School District Statistics
- 96 Schools
- 31,088 Students
- 414 Libraries in Full-Time Equivalents (FTEs)
- 11.9% Non-Librarian FTE per School
- 877 Students Per Librarian FTE
- 47 Teachers Per Librarian FTE

**National Center for Education Statistics (NCEUS) data accessed from**

**School Library Impact Research**

Marble studies have found that test scores tend to be higher in schools where

1. Instructors are both with classroom teachers and independently;
2. Planning collaboratively with classroom teachers;
3. Providing professional development to teachers;
4. Meeting regularly with the principal;
5. Serving on key school advisory committees;
6. Facilitating the use of technology by students and teachers;
7. Providing technology support to teachers, and
8. Providing reading incentive programs.

Several library study projects suggest that scores tend to be higher in areas

- of high-interest development, teachers, and libraries themselves.
- of the curriculum and instruction, as well as the instruction.
- of the technology teacher, instructional support, and instructional

**SLIDE Reports, Website & Data Tools**

- The School Librarian Investigation—Decline or Evolution? (SLIDE) website. [https://nlsil.de](https://nlsil.de)

**State Profile**

**Profile for Colorado**

Change Since 2009-10 in Selected Educator FTEs

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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Elementary</strong></td>
<td>3.3%</td>
<td>3.4%</td>
<td>3.4%</td>
<td>3.5%</td>
<td>3.5%</td>
<td>3.6%</td>
<td>3.7%</td>
<td>3.8%</td>
<td>4.0%</td>
<td>4.1%</td>
<td>4.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Secondary</strong></td>
<td>3.4%</td>
<td>3.5%</td>
<td>3.6%</td>
<td>3.7%</td>
<td>3.8%</td>
<td>3.9%</td>
<td>4.0%</td>
<td>4.1%</td>
<td>4.2%</td>
<td>4.3%</td>
<td>4.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Instructional</strong></td>
<td>0.8%</td>
<td>1.0%</td>
<td>1.1%</td>
<td>1.2%</td>
<td>1.3%</td>
<td>1.4%</td>
<td>1.5%</td>
<td>1.6%</td>
<td>1.7%</td>
<td>1.8%</td>
<td>1.9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Today, the role of school librarian includes teaching students media literacy,
literacy, and digital citizenship, assisting teachers in designing and
delivering lessons and selecting resources, and integrating technology into the
curriculum, in addition to managing collections and encouraging reading.

New school librarians often impact students who are likely to need
their services the most, and should be of major concern to education policy makers.

The School Librarian Investigation—Decline or Evolution? Kaseh & Larner, 2022
Just as a rainforest with biodiversity is equipped to adapt and respond to threats, humanity needs neurodiversity.

We all benefit when we have different kinds of minds solving the world's problems, creating our works of art, and enriching our communities.

~ Adriana White